

biguus and allies). He called attention to specimens of the former in which the middle tail-feathers had not been denuded into the usual racket-shaped form, and stated the prevailing theories offered in explanation of the racket-shaped tail-feathers in the Motmots. He also called attention to a peculiar, dark-colored, and otherwise abnormal specimen of the Carolina Rail taken at Erie, Pennsylvania.

On the afternoon of the third day some time was spent in informal session in examination of the Thrushes and Horned Larks sent in by various members for exhibition at the meeting.*

Resolutions were adopted extending the thanks of the Union to the President and Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History for the use of the Museum building as a place of meeting, and for other courtesies; to the Linnæan Society of New York for the collation daily provided for the members; and to Dr. C. Hart Merriam in recognition of his untiring labors as Secretary during the last six years, to which the success of the Union is so largely to be ascribed.

In point of attendance, and in the number and character of the papers presented, the Seventh Congress proved the most successful of the series.

It was voted to hold the next meeting in Washington, on the third Tuesday of November, 1890.

RECENT LITERATURE.

Waterhouse's 'Index Generum Avium.'† The character, scope, and purpose of this extremely useful work cannot be better expressed than by the quotation of a paragraph from its preface by Mr. P. L. Selater. "It will be observed that, as its title implies, the 'Index Generum Avium,' consists merely of an alphabetical list of about 7000 terms that have been employed or suggested by various authors, since the date of the twelfth edition of Linnæus's 'Systema Naturæ,' as generic and subgeneric names for birds, and references to the places and dates of their publication. No attempt has been made to discriminate between these various terms as to

*See further on this matter a paragraph under 'Notes and News' of this issue of 'The Auk.'

† Index Generum Avium. | — | A List | of the | Genera and Subgenera of Birds. | By | F. H. Waterhouse, A. L. S., | Librarian to the Zoölogical Society of London. | — | London: | R. H. Porter, 18 Princes Street, Cavendish Square. | 1889.—8vo. 311,+ pp. 240.

which of them should be most correctly employed. Such points are left for the decision of those who use the 'Index.' But so much time is often lost in ascertaining where and when a generic name was first given, that it is believed that the information thus accumulated in a handy form cannot fail to be of much practical value.

"The author does not profess that the 'Index' is complete, but as Librarian of the Zoölogical Society of London, and thus with one of the best series of ornithological books in the world at his command, he has done his utmost to render it free from errors and omissions. Except in the few cases [ten only!] where they are marked with an asterisk, all the references have been personally verified."

Mr. Slater states that the plan and execution of the work "are entirely due to Mr. Waterhouse," and that he has "only assisted him by general advice, by looking over the proof-sheets, and by writing these few words of preface."

With such facilities, and with the aid of such previous compilations in the same line as those of G. R. Gray, Agassiz, Bonaparte, Giebel, Marschall, and Scudder, there should certainly be very few omissions, and very few errors of citation, yet the work being of human origin a few such imperfections should be inevitable, but so far as we have examined they are extremely rare.*

The most serious defect in the work and, we cannot help feeling, a glaring one, relates to its plan and scope, by which all work (except Brissonian) done prior to the twelfth (1766) edition of Linnæus's 'Systema Naturæ' is ignored; — and this too in the year 1889, in face of the fact that three fourths of the biologists, taking the world at large, begin with the tenth (1758) edition of Linnæus's great work, or earlier, as the starting point for generic names! Consequently over forty Linnæan generic names adopted in the tenth (1758) edition are ascribed to the twelfth (1766), and some twenty others to Brisson, who adopted them in 1760, mostly from Linnæus, or some earlier writer.

Another defect to which it seems necessary to call attention is the occasional citation of purely vernacular French names (mostly from Cuvier and Lesson) as though they were proper generic terms. This reprehensible fashion was started by G. R. Gray in 1840 (in 'A List of the Genera of Birds', etc.); these are not only cited in the work under notice (many of them in fact properly enough, being in a certain sense adopted as, or at least treated as, generic or subgeneric names by Gray), but we meet with a number of new ones, as, *e. g.*, 'Barbacous,' 'Cacatoes,' and 'Jabirus' from Cuvier, and 'Cañaca' (= "Les Cañacas" Less.), 'Papegais', etc., from Lesson. Gray Latinized and adopted many such terms, and they

* *E. g.*, *Buceros*, Linn., 1758, is ascribed to Brünnich, 1772; *Phaethon*, Linn., 1758, is ascribed to Illiger, 1811; *Bombycilla*, a Brissonian name, is credited to Vieillot, 1807; "*Abia*, Agassiz, 1840," is incorrectly given as "*Habia* Cuv." Turning to *Habia* (p. 91) we find it there credited to Vieillot, 1817, where, however, it is employed as merely a French vernacular name. *Habia*, as a proper generic name, dates really from Reichenbach, 1850, as fully shown some five years ago by Dr. Stejneger in 'The Auk' (Vol. I, 1884, p. 366).

should hence take their date and authority from Gray, and not from their prior use in a vernacular sense by the French authors.

Variations in orthography, due to emendations or to typographical errors, are quite freely given, but by no means exhaustively; thus in such striking cases as *Sayornis* and *Sayiornis*, *Pediocætes* and *Pediæcetes*, not infrequently only the original form is cited, while in the case of *Poocætes* and *Poæcetes*, both forms are given.*

As a whole Mr. Waterhouse's 'Index' is a work of great merit, involving an immense amount of patient, painstaking, arduous labor, for which systematic ornithologists the world over will be truly grateful.—J. A. A.

Blanchard on the Nomenclature of Organized Beings.†—This 'Report' is more general in its scope than the 'Code of Nomenclature' of the American Ornithologists' Union, dealing as it does with Botany and Palæontology as well as with living animals, and hence has to confront questions arising from the peculiar conditions met with among the lower forms of animal life (where larval forms have been made the basis of species and genera, and in Palæontology, where species and genera have been based on parts of an organism), which the A. O. U. Committee were not especially called upon to consider. It is pleasant to find, however, the present report in nearly complete harmony with the rulings of the A. O. U. Committee, as regards not only leading principles but in special cases, where the ground covered is the same.

The chief points of difference from the A. O. U. 'Code' relate to the starting point for the beginning of the binomial system, and the matter of emendation of names. As to the first, the 'Report' takes the tenth (1758) edition of Linnaeus's 'Systema Naturæ' as the real starting point (as does also the A. O. U. 'Code') but makes reservations in favor of (1) Tournefort (Botany, 1700; Mollusks, 1742), (2) Lang (Mollusks, 1752), (3) Klein (Mollusks, 1753), (4) Clerck (Spiders, 1757), and (5) Adanson (Mollusks, 1757), the works of these authors conforming strictly to the binomial system. The action of the 'Law of Priority' is thus not strictly limited in point of time, but by the following conditions: "Article XI. Le nom attribué à chaque Genre et à chaque Espèce ne peut être que celui sous lequel ils ont été le plus anciennement désignés, à la condition: *a.*—Que ce nom ait été divulgué dans une publication où il aura été clairement et suffisamment défini; *b.*—Que l'auteur ait effectivement entendu appliquer les règles de la nomenclature binaire."

In discussing the 'Law of Priority' Dr. Blanchard revives and emphasizes the strictures made by M. Chaper in his report on the same subject‡

* Singularly, however, the change of *Poocætes* to *Poæcetes*, is ascribed to Sharpe, 1888, though made by Coues some ten years earlier.

†De la Nomenclature des êtres organisés. Rapport présenté au Congrès International de Zoologie par le Dr. Raphaël Blanchard, Professeur-Agrégé à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris, Secrétaire général de la Société Zoologique de France. > Congrès International de Zoologie, Paris, 1889. Rapports présentés au Congrès International de Zoologie. July, 1889, pp. 87-157.

‡ De la nomenclature des êtres organisés. 8vo, pp. 37, 1881.